

[Girlhood Life in Portland, 1860-76]

Beliefs & Customs - Folkstuff

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Project worker William C Haight

Project editor

Remarks W13915

Form A

Circumstances of Interview

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Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker William C. Haight Date January 4, 1939

Address 1225 SW Alder Street, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Girlhood Life In Portland, 1860-76.

Name and address of informant Miss Etta Crawford, Imperial Arms

Apartments, 14th & Jefferson Streets, Portland

Date and time of interview December 26 and 29, 1938

Place of interview Miss Crawford's Apartment, 504.

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

Howard Corning, 400 Elks Building, Portland.

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

none.

Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

The Imperial Arms, an apartment house, is a five-story, red brick, with white marble columns. The entrance is attractively landscaped with green shrubs natural to the Northwest. The hallway and foyer is in paneled wood. Attractive and pleasant. Miss Crawford's apartment is a four room one, situated on the fifth floor, near a fire escape. A

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small hallway leads into the "Parlor." Windows open out onto a balcony from this room where several boxes for flowers are arranged. This room is filled with furniture of the period of early Oregon history. The furniture is an inheritance from her father and mother, who settled here in 1843. of particular note is a chest of drawers. The color is a sort of burnished copper, 2 slightly faded because someone "Forgot to pull the blinds down and the sun hit it". There are several scars on it gathered through years of usage, which the owner prefers to leave as they are. Too, she has a piano made by Voss & Sons in Boston. This wood is of mahogany, although it looks like it might be of cherry. The front of the piano is covered with delicate and fancy carvings. The walls of the room are covered with pictures that have been in use in Oregon since the earliest days. One is a chrome published at one time in the [Pacific Advocate.?] Her mother cut this picture out and had it framed. It is a pastoral scene, much as if it had been painted in the Willamette Valley.

The sitting room adjoining, in contrast to its early pioneer furniture, which includes an "elegant" settee and chair, has a modern expensive radio. Miss Crawford is quite fond of symphony music and spends many pleasant hours relaxing in a chair by this radio.

Two Oriental rugs cover the floors. The rooms, decorated in early furniture, are luxurious and in good taste. A Paisley shawl hangs on a wall as a decoration. One feels that he has stepped into a home of fifty years ago, with all modern conveniences miraculously in place.

An interesting mahogany table that she uses for a desk was previously a melodeon.

Form B

Personal History of Informant

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Works Progress Administration

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OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker William C. Haight Date January 4, 1939.

Address 1225 SW Alder Street, Portland, Oregon.

Subject Girlhood Life in Portland, 1860-76.

Name and address of informant Etta D. Crawford, Imperial Arms Apartment.

14th & Jefferson Streets, Portland.

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

1. Ancestry
2. Place and date of birth
3. Family
4. Places lived in, with dates
5. Education, with dates
6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
7. Special skills and interests
8. Community and religious activities
9. Description of informant
10. Other points gained in interview

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1. Miss Crawford is the daughter of Medorem Crawford, pioneer settler who came to Oregon in 1842. Further back than this she refused to talk.
 2. Demands and exercises the ladies' prerogative of refusing date of birth, also information that might give an approximate idea.
 3. Her father and mother were married April 12, 1843 at the Mission House on Mission Prairie. They moved to Wheatland, where her father had a farm. Their son, Medorem was born there. He is supposedly the first boy of American parentage born west of the Willamette river. This son was later a Brigadier General, stationed in Washington, D. C. He was a graduate of West Point. From Wheatland her father and family moved to Oregon City, in 1845. Here, with his yoke of black oxen he freighted goods around the Willamette Falls, establishing the first public transportation system in Oregon. In 1852 he bought a farm, near Dayton. There were 10 children born to this union. Six grew to maturity. Her 2 father attended the meeting at Champoeg, May 2, 1843, when the Oregon provisional government was organized. He represented Clackamas county in the legislature of the provisional government, in 1847-48. In 1860 he was elected from Yamhill county to the legislature. He was collector of internal revenue from 1863 to 1868, and appraiser from 1871 to 1876. In 1876 he returned to his farm near Dayton, Oregon, where he spent 16 years making this place into a model farm.
- Mrs Crawford was an active campaigner for the / election of Col. E. D. Baker, to the United States Senate, from Oregon. In 1861 he went east to visit relatives and on his way back to Oregon he was assistant to Captain Maynadier, in charge of troops escorting emigrants to Oregon. In 1862 he again went east, and President Lincoln appointed him assistant quartermaster, with the rank of Captain. He was assigned to escorting emigrants across the country.
4. She refused to give dates or exact places. In Oregon, North Central New York, and Washington, D. C. were places mentioned.

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5. Graduate of St. Helens Hall, in 1876. A remarkable, intelligent woman, with little thought of the past and vivid interest in the present.

6. Refused to give any information. Vitally interested in politics and at one time was a member of the Oregon Precinct Committee for the Republican party. Occupation mainly, I presume, keeping house for relatives.

7. An economical housekeeper, and interested in symphony music, Pro-American meetings, REPUBLICAN PARTY, politics, hates Nazis, Fascists, Communists; tolerates Democrats because believes in liberty.

8. Community interest only political, and only slightly religious. 3 9. Pert is the word for Etta. Well preserved features with a lovely skin. Brown eyes that dance with the merriment of life. Approximately five-feet-four. Delicate hands and feet. Coquettishly tosses her head sideways and looks at you smilingly. Spry, alert, intelligent.

10. Her philosophy of life can be summed up in two statements: "No matter how big the hurt, it's how you take it that counts"; and "Do the best you can, with what you have, wherever you are". Her sense of humor is most entertaining. Thinks the youth of today lacks certain qualities that are necessary: courage, fortitude, ambition. Glad that she doesn't have to start out as a young person in the world today.

Form C

Text of Interview (Unedited)

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OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Address 1225 SW Alder Street

Subject Girlhood Life in Portland, 1860-76.

Name and address of informant Etta Crawford, Imperial Arms Apartments.

14th and Jefferson Streets, Portland.

Text: I have lived from the covered wagon days to the airplane. I think the most striking manner of showing how far we have progressed is through the mode of transportation.

The idioms of the day when I was a girl were picturesque, colorful, and to the point. Most of it, although not really vulgar would be better not repeated. I insist on this right as a lady. (A few of the phrases she used were quaint to my ears). She said that the trouble with people today is that everyone has "a ditch to dig, and they have to dig it alone, and they won't do it."

.... In speaking of a friend of hers who sold Bibles for a living, she said, "he didn't have any more religion than a cat, but he always asked the people's blessings before he started his sales talk." She described this young man as "smart as a trap" In speaking of an early acquaintance, she said: "I used to desk with her in school at St. / Helens Hall. Poor thing, she went out because of death".... Next spring, she said, she was planning on going East to revisit friends and see the New York World's Fair, before "my toes are in the ashes".

2 Of course, the early social life in Portland, as far as I was personally concerned, was rather limited. I was then a little girl, not more than fourteen or fifteen. Of course, now it is different, but in those days a mother knew everything that her daughter was doing. You bet she did, or else there was a plenty hot time around the house.

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For amusement we girls would have little parties. For the most part they were informal. There was little elaborate entertaining although occasionally some one would entertain for us elaborately.

I remember our parties used to consist mainly of kissing games, such as forfeit, postoffice, and other such trash. You see, most of my family and friends were Methodists, and they did not for the most part believe in dancing as an entertainment. My mother did believe in it, / despite the fact she was a Methodist. She rightly termed dancing as a good method a teaching her daughters poise, grace and charm.

The dances we used to dance were the "Waltzing Quadrille", a beautiful dance, and "The German". The German dance was an expensive dance. It called for favors for everyone and someone had to call it off. There were elaborate figures danced. Sometimes it would be around a Maypole with the favors tied on each ribbon that was tied to the Maypole. Not often did we dance this one though, because it was such an elaborate performance.

However, we waltzed and polkaed, and the strenuous but hilarious square dances were always in high favor. Another dance, I can't spell it, I believe it is French , was called the Gavotte — or something similar to that name.

To attend these dances, which were always given in private homes, we always got a special invitation by card. The hostess would send her compliments to you and invite you to attend. She would always name a boy that would come and 3 take you to the party, and would see that you were properly escorted all evening. We really didn't have dates. Mother considered we were too young. Rightly, I think. I don't approve of this present-day manner of traipsing around half the night. None of the boys that attended me to the dances were on calling acquaintance.

I remember one boy took me home from a party. Finally we were getting close to my house and I said this is where I live. "Is that so?" he said, obviously relieved of the

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necessity of having to take me any farther. "Yes", I said, "it is the identical place." I was horribly distressed because I wasn't sure I had used the right word. I simply could hardly wait until the boy left, until I could find the dictionary and see if I had used the right word.

Some of the girls would get to go on boat trips, up and down the river; but my mother felt that I was too young for such pleasure. The boys that could have taken me wouldn't anyway, because they referred to all girls my age as "trundle-bed trash."

I don't remember any of the early superstitions that were going around. Oh poo! there were those about Friday, and crossing in front of a funeral train, and such trash, but they did not play any part in my life. My family were a highly practical group of people. They didn't pay any attention to such things. It's why I don't have any imagination, I guess; we never heard fairy stories, or any of the fanciful things of life.

I remember a joke that we used to get a great deal of fun out of repeating. It had to do with the early newspapers. You know, if you have seen them, that the outsides were covered with advertisements of the patent medicines, and patent articles from the outside world that had no connection with our life; most 4 of it trash. Well, we used to say, that if we didn't like anything it was like the newspapers, patent outsides and no insides.

Form D

Extra Comment

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OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

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Address 1225 SW Alder Street. Portland, Oregon.

Subject Girlhood Life in Portland, 1860-76.

Name and address of informant Miss Etta Crawford

Imperial Arms Apts., 14th and Jefferson, Portland.

Comment: The informant is an utterly charming woman, active mentally and physically. Her sense of humor abounds. She has an infectious lady-like giggle that is often slightly smothered with one covering hand.

She is vitally interested in politics. Rather tolerant, because she does believe in a democracy. Granted that it could function better with Republican control, but that the Democrats have shown the way for the conservatives.

She feels that America is now awakened to all of its dangers — foreign, domestic. Those Nazi spies, the Lima Pan-American conference, and other such moves of the government, have given her a new lift. She feels that America is again on the right road.

Her doubts are plentiful of the younger people's attitude towards the world, but supposes they will work it out all right, though. Her nephew, obviously, is a white hope in that direction.

Her interest in the interviewer was keen. Her judgment on his career was, "Well, everybody might as well hang up their fiddle, until you get this bee out of your bonnet." 2 She spends little time in retrospection. Although was rather delighted with the opportunity, for a short while, to travel down memory lane. But her past is lost in the rush of the present.

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Miss Crawford has an intelligent approach to all problems, although she has a lack of understanding of poverty, presumably because she has never faced it.

She has few friends. Would rather spend her time listening to the radio, reading the daily newspapers, and attending Republican party meets and Pro-America meetings. Vitally interested in symphony music. Miss Crawford and her neighbor have developed a system of acquainting each other with a good radio program, when it is on. Without the effort of leaving the apartment and running to the other's door, one of them will knock on the dividing wall. One knock means one station, two another, and so on. This is convenient. She also has a set of signals that provide for her neighbor down below. Sometimes she calls down the commodities lift, to acquaint her lower neighbor of a radio program.

Her energy and activity is amazing, considering the number of years she has obviously lived.